WE HAVE JUST BEGUN A NEW YEAR, THE DIGITS HAVE CHANGED ON OUR CALENDERS, THIS IS THE TIME AT WHICH WE ARE CALLED UPON TO START ANEW, TO RING OUT THE OLD AND USHER IN THE NEW. I SUPPOSE WE COULD APPLY THE SAME IDEAS AND FEELINGS TO CHRISTIANITY AND TO OUR RESPECTIVE PERSONAL SPIRITUAL ENDEAVORS. WE COULD SAY THAT ANY LIST OF RESOLUTIONS SHOULD BEGIN WITH "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." OR OTHER SINGULAR RESOLUTIONS TO LEAD A BETTER LIFE. THIS IS VERY COMMENDABLE AND I HEARTILY ENCOURAGE YOU ALONG THESE LINES--BUT I BELIEVE CHRISTIANITY IS BIGGER THAN THAT. IT GOES DEEPER THAN NEW YEAR RESOLUTION LISTS. IT HAS A MESSAGE THAT PERMEATES ALL OF LIFE: THE NEWS THAT WE JOYOUSLY ANNOUNCED IN OUR CAROLS LAST WEEK IS URGENT ALWAYS AND ESPECIALLY AT NEW YEARS.

FIRST LET US TAKE A BRIEF LOOK AT THE TWELVE MONTH PERIOD BEHIND US AND THE ONE THAT LIES AHEAD.

THE YEAR BEGAN WITH THE SETTLING OF THE MOST CRIPPLING STEEL STRIKE OUR NATION HAS EVER KNOWN. UNEMPLOYMENT ROSE WHILE COMMUNISTS CHUCKLED WITH DELIGHT.

IN CUBA FIDEL CASTRO BEGAN THE FIRST OF HIS MANY CONFISCATIONS OF AMERICAN PROPERTY AND INVESTMENTS.

A PREVIEW OF THINGS TO COME WAS SEEN AS FRENCH PRESIDENT CHARLES DEGAULLE ORDERED HIS ARMY TO HALT FRENCH INSURRECTION IN AFRICA.

IN FEBRUARY WE WERE SHOCKED TO HEAR THAT DISK JOCKEY'S WERE MAKING OFF WITH

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ILLEGALLY. THIS IN TURN PROMPTED AN INVESTIGATION OF ADVERTISING TECHNIQUES THAT QUICKLY REVEALED HOW DISHONEST AND HOW GULLIBLE men are.

THE WORLD BECAME A LITTLE MORE UNEASY IN FEB. AS FRANCE JOINED THE CIRCLE OF NATIONS CAPABLE OF DESTROYING THEIR ENEMIES WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

AND IN WASHINGTON, IN THE SENATE, MEN WHO WERE ELECTED BY A PEOPLE THAT IS FOND OF THE PHRASE "(LAND OF THE FREE AND HOME OF THE BRAVE") TALKED FOR 82 STRAIGHT HOURS IN ORDER TO AVOID A DISCUSSION THAT CENTERED ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER A MAN OF A DIFFERENT COLOR HAS THE SAME RIGHTS AS A WHITE MAN.

AS MARCH BEGAN THE FLAMES OF HATRED AND RESEBT BETWEEN U.S. AND CUBA WERE FANNED WHEN CASTRO ACCUSED U.S. OF BLOWING UP A MUNITIONS SHIP.

IN SOUTH AFRICA POLICE FIRED INTO A CROWD OF DEMONSTRATING NEGROES KILLING 86.

IN THE SPRING THE WORLD WATCHED AS RUSSIA AND THE U.S. CONTINUED THE ACE TO GET THE BIGGEST AND BEST SATTILITES INTO SPACE.

POLITICAL FERMENT WAS IN THE AIR AS RIOTS OCCURED IN KOREA, TURKEY AND JAPAN AND ALGERIA.

INDIA EXPERIENCED THE RUDE AWAKERNING OF COMMUNIST AGGRESSION AND CARYLE CHESSMAN'S NAME AGAIN CAME TO THE EYE AS AMERICA DEMONSTRATED VESTIGES OF MEDIEVAL BARBARIANISM FOR THE WORLD TO SEE.

THEN CAME THE U2 INCIDENT AND A FAILURE AT THE SUMMIT. PEACE ON EARTH MOVED A LITTLE FURTHER AWZY FROM THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY.

AS SUMMER APPEARED WORLD PROBLEMS AND TENSION MOUNTED. CUBA'S SEIZURE OF AMERICAN PROPERTY INCREASED, AMERICANS RECEIVED A BLOW TO ITS PRESTIGE., WHEN RIOTING FORCED OUR PRESIDENT TO CANCEL A GOOD-WILL MISSION TO JAPAN.

KRUSCHEV THREATENED ROCKETS IF U.S. INTERVENED IN CUBA AND RUMBLINGS FROM AFRICA AS CONGOLESE ARMY REBELLED.

THE FALL BROUGHT NO RELIEF AS CUBA BECAME OUTWARDLY COMMUNIST, THE POLITICAL PROBLEM IN THE NEW REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO ERUPTED WITH A WAVE OF VIOLENCE. AND IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH WHITE MOTHERS LINED THE STREETS TO SCREAM AND SPIT AT 6 YEAR OLD NEGRO GIRLS WHO TOOK SERIOUSLY THE PROMISE OF LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

I HAVE NOT REVIEWED THESE VENTS THAT ARE NOW HISTORY IN ORDER TO INSTRUCT YOU IN CURRENT EVENTS, BUT RATHER I HOPE THEY WILL GIVE SOME INDICATION OF THE "TONE OF THE TIMES" BY REVIEWING THE DARK STAINS ON THE YEAR 1960 PERHAPS WE CAN GIVE SOME CONCEPTION OF THE PROBLEMS CHRISTIANITY MUST COPE WITH/ THE ISSUES ON WHICH IT MUST TAKE A FIRM STAND IF IT IS TO REMAIN A DRIVING RELEVANT FORCE IN THE MODERN WORLD.

AND HOW ABOUT THE FUTURE? WHO CAN POSSIBLY TELL? THE YEAR 1961 IS DOOMED TO BE ONE FILLED WITH TENSION AND VIOLENCE. THE PROBLEM IN THE CONGO IS ONLY A SAMPLE

OF WHAT COULD OCCUR OVER THE ENTIRE CONTINENT OF AFRICA AS THE BACKWARD COUNTRIES STRIVE FOR INDEPENDENCE. THE THREAT OF ATOMIC WAR ANNIHILATION INCREASES EACH TIME A NEW NATION DISCOVERS AND DEVELOPES THE METHOD OF SPLITTING ATOMS. AND IN OUR OWN COUNTRY WE ARE NO LESS CONTENT. RACIAL PROBLEMS WILL NOT DISAPPEAR OVER NIGHT, DOMESTIC AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS ARE CONSTANTLY POTENTIAL CRISES.

BY NO MEANS DO WE LIVE IN A PEACEFUL AND HAPPY ERA, AT BEST THE FUTURE CAN BE SAID TO BE HAZY.

AND WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANITY? DOES IT FIT INTO THIS TROUBLED AND TENSION RIDDEN WORLD OF TODAY? OR HAS IT BEEN OUTDATED BY MODERN SOCIETY, BY SCIENCE, BY THE TECHNICAL REVOLUTION?

I DON'T WANT TO SOUND LIKE I'M GIVING A PEP TALK BUT I THINK THAT IT IS APPROPRIATE ON NEW YEARS DAY TO LOOK TO THE PAST AND FUTURE AND TO EXAMINE LIFE, THE WORLD, OURSELVES AND SEE WHAT ROLE CHRISTIANITY PLAYS.

IN OCTOBER I PREACHED A SERMON TITLED "FIRST THINGS FIRST" EURGING THAT YOU SIMPLY WEIGH ALL THE COMPLEXITIES AND INS AND OUTS OF LIFE GIVING DUE RESPECT TO THE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT. IT IS A POINT THAT I WILL RETURN TO TIME AND TIME AGAIN. IF WE ARE ACTUALLY SEROUS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY, IF WE ACTUALLY BELIEVE

THAT THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY APPROACHED MAN IN THE PERSON OF JESUS THE CHRIST THEN THIS MUST BE OUR STARTING POINT. THIS MUST BE THE GROUNDWORK THAT LIES BENEATH ALL WE DO AND SAY.

AS CHRISTIANS WE HAVE TAKEN ON OURSELVES GRAVE RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS. A FAITH THAT CANNOT APPLY TO EVERYDAY SITUATIONS, TO POLITICS, TO RACIAL ISSUES, TO LIFE IN ITS EVERYDAY INTRACACIES IS NO FAITH AT ALL. A MAN WHO IGNORES HIS RESPON* SIBLITITIES TO TAKE A STAND ON THE ISSUES THAT CONFRONT HIM IS NOT A CHRISTIAN/ NOT A LIGHT BUT A SHADOWL

AS A CURCH WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE COMMUNITY OF DYER AND AS INDI VIDUALS WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES TO OUR NIEGHBORS EVERY WHERE. TO THE OLD TEST. QUESTION ("AM I MY BORTHER'S KEEPER?") WE MUST ANSWER A UNANIMOUS YES.

IN MAKING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS, IN OBERSVING THIS T ME OF RENEWAL WE WOULD DO WELL TO FOLLOW THE ADVICE OFPAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS ("FOR NO OTHER FOUNDA* TION CAN ANY ONE LAY THAT THAT WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. IF ANYONE BUILDS ON THE FOUNDATION WITH GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STUBBLE, EACH MAN'S WORK WILL BECOME MANIFEST FOR THE DAY WILL DISCLOSE IT.")

THE CONFLICTS AND ISSUES OF EVERYDAY LFE ARE THE MEASURING STICK TO WHICH OUR FAITH MUST ANSWER. IF OUR LIVES ARE BUILT ON SHABBY STUBBLE, WOOD AND HAY THEY ARE TO NO AVAIL. BUT IF OUR ENTIRE MODE OF LIVING IS ABASED ON THE ULTIMATE

REALITY (THAT GOD WAS IN CHRIST) THEN THE STRUCTURE WILL TAKE ON THE MAGNIFICANCE OF A SOLID AND ELABORATE EDIFACE, CAPABLE OF WITHSTALANDING ALL OF LIFE'S STORMS.

IN FIRST CENTURY CORINTH WORLDLY PROBLEMS WERE VERY IMPORTANTJUST AS PRESSING AND CRUCIAL THEN AS THEY ARE NOW. IN WRITING TO HIS FRINEDS PAUL INSTRUCTS THEM ON HOW TO MEET LIFE'S VARYING SITUATIONS IN DETAIL BUT THEN HE MAKES THE MOST ASTONISHING ASSERTION. PRESSING AS THESE PROBLEMS SEEM, HE TELLS THEM, DO NOT DESPAIR FOR ULTIMATELY, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS (ALL THINGS ARE YOURS, LIFE, DEATH AND THE WORLD, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE ALL ARE YOURS, BECAUSE YOU ARE CHRIST'S ANE CHRIST IS GOD'S.)

ALL THE MARVEL AND WONDER OF THE WORLD AND ALL ITS BEAUTY ARE OURS IF WE HAVE EYES TO SEE AND HEARTS TO APPRECIATE. THESE ARE PARTS OF GOD'S GIFT IN JESUS CHRIST TO EVERY ONE OF SU. THE WHOLE OF NATURE AND HUMAN LIFE BECOMES, TO THE CHRISTIAN, A SACRAMENT BRIMMING WITH THE GRACE AND LOVE OF GOD. ALL OF LIFE ITS JOYS AND PLEASURES, SORROWS AND SUFFERINGS, IS POSSIBLE ONLY IN THAT IT IS A GIFT FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

WHEN WE CONSIDER THIS, WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE MOST COMFORTING AND YET

CHALLENGING NEWS MEN HAVE EVER HEARD. IN LIGHT OF THESE WORDS THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE BECOME SOLLUBLE BECAUSE LIFE ITSELF IS A GIFT. THE ISSUES THAT CROP UP OUT OF THE PROCESS OF EXISTING ARE BROUGHT TO A HEAD BECAUSE THEY TOO ARE A GIFT FROM GOD.

LET US NOT IGNORE THIS GLORIOUS NEWS, LET US NOT COMPARTMENTALIZE CHRISTIANITY. IT IS BIGGER THAN A SUNDAY MORNING AFFAIR. IT IS OUR FOUNDAT ON FOR LIVING IT IS THE DURABLE GROUND WORK FROM WHICH WE CAN CONFRONT THE ISSUES OF THE WORLD CONFIDENTLY SAYING EVERYTHING IS MINE BECAUSE I AM CHRIST'S AND CHRIST IS GOD'S.

Conclusion

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN ANOTHER NEW YEAR, AS WE BEGIN IT LET US DO TWO THINGS. LET US REALIZE AND FULFILL OUR OBLIGATIONS AS CHRISTIANS NEVER BACKING AWAY FROM AN ISSUE THAT PUTS OUR FAITH TO A TEST. AND ABOVE LET US STRIVE TO LIVE, TO EXIST, TO OPERATE AS MEN WHO KNOW THAT ALL THINGS COME FROM GOD THE CREATED: AS MEN WHOSE FOUNDATION IS SOLID BEING BUILT ON OURLORD AND SAVIOR EVEN JESUS CHRIST.

AMEN.